

John Campbell of California has become the front-runner to succeed Jeb Hensarling as chairman of an influential group of House Republicans. The Republican Study Committee, which represents the party's conservative faction, will begin the process of evaluating candidates to be its next chairman ne... John Campbell of California has become the front-runner to succeed Jeb Hensarling as chairman of an influential group of House Republicans.

The Republican Study Committee, which represents the party's conservative faction, will begin the process of evaluating candidates to be its next chairman next week.

Campbell serves as the chairman of the group's budget and spending task force and has been one of Hensarling's close allies. The two men worked together to pressure Minority Leader John A. Boehner, R-Ohio, to initiate an earmark moratorium for all Republicans, in the absence of a Congress-wide ban on earmarks. Boehner rejected the GOP-only moratorium on grounds that it lacked consensus support, but he will be under pressure to adopt a similar ban in the 111th Congress.

Campbell could face tough competition. Potential rivals include Kevin Brady of Texas; Lynn Westmoreland and Tom Price, both of Georgia, and Steve King of Iowa. The RSC chairman has traditionally been selected based on the recommendation of a group of a half-dozen elders of the group. But Hensarling, of Texas, requested and then won a membership vote in 2006, defeating the candidate favored by the RSC elders, Todd Tiahrt of Kansas.

Campbell said he had no plans, for now, to take the decision out of the hands of this group. "It's going to depend on who they pick. I really don't have any problem with any of the other potential candidates," Campbell said.

"What you get if you go with me is someone who can be aggressive on things. I've been aggressive in dealing with our leadership. I've shown an ability to lead people and get to a place where we can make a difference," Campbell said.

The RSC elders will begin interviewing Campbell and other candidates next week.

The group making the selections includes Hensarling, Mike Pence of Indiana, John Shadegg of Arizona, Sue Myrick of North Carolina, Dan Burton of Indiana and Sam Johnson of Texas.

The RSC, which has 106 members, became a majority of the GOP conference for the first time after the 2006 election.